Heads of Agreement

Assented to by the

United Ministers

In and about LONDON:

Formerly called

PRESBYTERIAN

AND

CONGREGATIONAL.

Licensed and Entred according to Order.

LONDON:
Printed by *R. R.* for THO. COCKERILL, at the *Three Legs* in the *Poultrey*, over-against the *Stocks-Market*. MDCXCI.

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United Ministers,

In and about *LONDON*, &c.

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Assented to by the

United Ministers, &c.

The following Heads of AGREEMENT *have been Resolved upon, by the* UNITED *Ministers in and about* London, *formerly called* Presbyterian *and* Congregational; *not as a Measure for any* National Constitution, *but for the Preservation of Order in our Congregations, that cannot come up to the Common Rule by Law Established.*

I. *Of* CHURCHES *and* CHURCH-MEMBERS.

1. WE Acknowledge our *Lord Jesus Christ* to have One *Catholick Church*, or *Kingdom*, comprehending all that are united to Him, whether in *Heaven* or *Earth*. And do conceive the

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whole multitude of *visible Believers*, and their Infant-Seed (commonly called the *Catholick Visible Church*) to belong to *Christ's Spiritual Kingdom* in this world: But for the notion of a *Catholick Visible Church* here, as it signifies its having been collected into any formed Society, under a Visible human Head on Earth, whether *one* Person singly, or *many* collectively, We, with the rest of Protestants, unanimously disclaim it.

2. We agree, That particular Societies of Visible Saints, who under Christ their Head, are statedly joined together for ordinary Communion with one another, in all the Ordinances of Christ, are *particular Churches*, and are to be owned by each other, as Instituted Churches of Christ, tho differing in *apprehensions* and *practice* in some lesser things.

3. That none shall be admitted as Members, in order to Communion in all the

the ſpecial Ordinances of the Goſpel, but ſuch perſons as are knowing and ſound in the *fundamental Doctrines of the Chriſtian Religion*, without Scandal in their Lives; and to a Judgment regulated by the Word of God, are perſons of viſible Godlineſs and Honeſty; credibly profeſſing cordial ſubjection to Jeſus Chriſt.

4. A competent Number of ſuch *viſible Saints* (as before deſcribed) do become the capable Subjects of ſtated Communion in all the *ſpecial Ordinances of Chriſt*, upon their mutual declared conſent and agreement *to walk together therein according to Goſpel Rule.* In which declaration, different degrees of *Explicite-neſs*, ſhall no way hinder ſuch Churches from owning each other, as *Inſtituted Churches.*

5. Tho *Parochial Bounds* be not of *Divine Right*, yet for common Edification, the Members of a *particular Church* ought

ought (as much as conveniently may be) to live near one another.

6. That each *particular Church* hath Right to chuſe their own Officers; and being furniſhed with ſuch as are *duly qualified* and *ordained* according to the Goſpel Rule, hath Authority from Chriſt for exerciſing *Government*, and of enjoying all the *Ordinances of Worſhip* within it ſelf.

7. In the Adminiſtration of *Church Power*, it belongs to the *Paſtors* and other *Elders* of every particular Church (if ſuch there be) to *Rule and Govern*: and to the Brotherhood to *Conſent*, according to the *Rule of the Goſpel*.

8. That all Profeſſors as before deſcribed, are bound in duty, as they have opportunity, to join themſelves as *fixed Members* of ſome particular Church; their thus joining, being part of their profeſſed ſubjection to the *Goſpel of Chriſt*, and

and an instituted means of their Establishment and Edification; whereby they are under the *Pastoral Care*; and in case of *scandalous* or *offensive walking*, may be Authoritatively Admonished or Censured for their recovery, and for vindication of the *Truth*, and the *Church* professing it.

9. That a *visible Professor* thus joined to a *particular Church*, ought to continue stedfastly with the said Church; and not forsake the Ministry and Ordinances there dispensed, without an orderly seeking a recommendation unto another Church. Which ought to be given, when the ease of the person apparently requires it.

II. *Of the* MINISTRY.

1. WE agree, That the *Ministerial Office* is instituted by Jesus Christ, for the Gathering, Guiding, Edifying, and Governing of his *Church*; and to continue to the end of the world.

2. They who are called to this *Office*, ought to be endued with *competent Learning*, and *Miniſterial Gifts*, as alſo with the Grace of God, ſound in Judgment, not Novices in the Faith and Knowledg of the Goſpel; without ſcandal, of holy Converſation, and ſuch as *devote* themſelves to the Work and Service thereof.

3. That ordinarily none ſhall be Ordained to the work of this Miniſtry, but ſuch as are *called* and *choſen* thereunto by a particular Church.

4. That in ſo great and weighty a matter, as the calling and chuſing a *Paſtor*, we judg it ordinarily requiſite, That every ſuch Church conſult and adviſe with the *Paſtors* of Neighbouring Congregations.

5. That after ſuch *Advice*, the Perſon conſulted about, being choſen by the Brotherhood of that particular Church over which

which he is to be ſet, and he accepting, be duly ordained, and ſet apart to his Office over them; wherein 'tis ordinarily requiſite, That the *Paſtors* of *Neighbouring Congregations* concur with the *Preaching-Elder*, or *Elders*, if ſuch there be.

6. That whereas ſuch *Ordination* is only intended for ſuch as never before had been ordained to the *Miniſterial Office*; If any judge, that in the caſe alſo of the removal of one formerly *Ordained*, to a new Station or *Paſtoral Charge*, there ought to be a like Solemn recommending him and his Labours *to the Grace and Bleſſing of God*; no different Sentiments or Practice herein, ſhall be any occaſion of *Contention* or *Breach of Communion* among us.

7. It is expedient, that they who enter on the work of *Preaching the Goſpel*, be *not* only qualified for Communion of Saints; but alſo that, except in *caſes extraordinary*, they give proof of their *Gifts* and *fitneſs*

for the *ſaid work*, unto the *Paſtors* of Churches of *known abilites* to diſcern and judge of their *qualifications*; That they may be ſent forth with *Solemn Approbation* and *Prayer*; which we judge needful, that no doubt may remain concerning their being Called to the work; and for preventing (as much as in us lieth) *Ignorant and raſh Intruders.*

III. *Of* Censures.

1. AS it cannot be avoided, but that in the *Pureſt Churches* on Earth, there will ſometimes *Offences* and *Scandals* ariſe by reaſon of *Hypocriſie* and *prevailing corruption*; ſo Chriſt hath made it the Duty of every Church, to reform it ſelf by *Spiritual Remedies*, appointed by him to be applied in all ſuch caſes; *viz.* *Admonition*, and *Excommunication.*

2. *Admonition*, being the rebuking of an *Offending Member* in order to conviction,

on, is in case of *private offences* to be performed according to the Rule in *Mat.* 18. *v.* 15, 16, 17. and in case of *Publick offences*, openly before the Church, as the *Honour of the Gospel*, and *nature of the Scandal* shall require: And if either of the *Admonitions* take place for the recovery of the *fallen Person*, all further proceedings in a way of *censure*, are thereon to cease, and *satisfaction* to be declared accordingly.

3. When all *due means* are used, according to the *Order of the Gospel*, for the restoring an *offending* and *scandalous Brother*; and he notwithstanding remains Impenitent, the Censure of *Excommunication* is to be proceeded unto; Wherein the *Pastor* and other *Elders* (if there be such) are to lead, and go before the *Church*; and the Brotherhood to give their consent, in a way of obedience unto Christ, and unto the *Elders*, as over them in the Lord.

4. It may sometimes come to pass, that

that a *Church-Member*, not otherwise Scandalous, may *sinfully withdraw*, and divide himself from the *Communion of the Church* to which he belongeth: In which case, when all *due means* for the reducing him, prove ineffectual, he having hereby cut himself off from *that Churches Communion*; the *Church* may justly esteem and declare it self discharged of any further inspection over him.

IV. *Of* Communion *of* Churches.

1. WE Agree, that *Particular Churches* ought not to walk so distinct and separate from each other, as not to have care and tenderness towards one another. But their *Pastors* ought to have frequent meetings together, that by mutual Advice, Support, Encouragement, and Brotherly intercourse, they may strengthen the hearts and hands of each other in the *ways of the Lord*.

2. That

2. That none of *our* particular Churches ſhall be *ſubordinate* to one another; each being endued with *equality of Power* from Jeſus Chriſt. And that none of the ſaid particular Churches, their Officer, or Officers, ſhall exerciſe any *Power*, or have any *Superiority* over any other Church, or their Officers.

3. That known Members of particular Churches, conſtituted as aforeſaid, may have occaſional Communion with one another in the *Ordinances of the Goſpel*, viz. the *Word*, *Prayer*, *Sacraments*, *Singing Pſalms*, diſpenſed according to the mind of Chriſt: Unleſs that Church with which they deſire Communion, hath any juſt exception againſt them.

4. That we ought not to admit any one to be a Member of our reſpective *Congregations*, that hath joined himſelf to another, without endeavours of mutual Satisfaction of the *Congregations* concerned.

5. That

5. That *one Church* ought not to blame the Proceedings of *another*, until it hath heard what *that Church* charged, *its Elders*, or *Messengers*, can lay in vindication of themselves from any charge of *irregular* or *injurious Proceedings*.

6. That we are most willing and ready to give an account of our *Church Proceedings* to each other, when desired; for preventing or removing any offences that may arise among us. Likewise we shall be ready to give the right hand of fellowship, and walk together according to the *Gospel Rules* of *Communion* of *Churches*.

V. *Of* Deacons *and* Ruling Elders.

WE agree, The Office of a *Deacon* is of Divine Appointment, and that it belongs to their Office to receive, lay out, and distribute the *Churches Stock* to its *proper uses*, by the direction of the *Pastor* and *Elders*, if such there be. And whereas

whereas divers are of opinion, That there is also the Office of *Ruling Elders*, who labour not in *word and doctrine*; and others think otherwise; We agree, That *this difference* make no *breach* among us.

VI. *Of* Synods.

1. WE agree, That in order to *concord*, and in any other *weighty* and *difficult* cases, it is needful, and according to the *mind of Christ*, that a *Synod* be called to *consult* and *advise* about such matters.

2. That a *Synod* may consist of *smaller* or *greater Numbers*, as the matter shall require.

3. That *particular Churches*, their respective *Elders*, and *Members*, ought to have a reverential regard to the judgment of such Synods, and not dissent therefrom, without *apparent* grounds from the word of God.

VII. *Of our* Demeanour *towards the* Civil Magistrate.

1. WE do reckon our ſelves obliged continually to pray for God's *Protection, Guidance,* and *Bleſſing* upon the *Rulers* ſet over us.

2. That we ought to yield unto them not only *ſubjection in the Lord,* but *ſupport,* according to our ſtation and abilities.

3. That if at any time it ſhall be their pleaſure to call together any Number of us, or require any *account* of our *Affairs,* and the ſtate of our *Congregations,* we ſhall moſt readily expreſs all *dutiful regard* to them herein.

VIII. *Of a* Confession *of* Faith.

AS to what appertains to *ſoundneſs of Judgment* in *matters of Faith,* we eſteem it ſufficient, That a Church acknowledge the *Scriptures to be the word of God,* the *perfect and only Rule of Faith and Practice;*

Practice; and own either the Doctrinal part of those commonly called the *Articles* of the Church of *England*, or the *Confession*, or *Catechisms*, *Shorter or Larger*, compiled by the *Assembly* at *Westminster*, or the *Confession* agreed on at the *Savoy*, to be agreeable to the said Rule.

IX. *Of our* Duty *and* Deportment *towards them that are not in Communion with us.*

1. WE judge it our duty to bear a *Christian Respect* to Fellow-Christians, according to their several Ranks and Stations, that are not of our *Persuasion* or *Communion.*

2. As for such as may be ignorant of the Principles of the *Christian Religion*, or of *vicious conversation*, we shall in our respective Places, as they give us opportunity, endeavour to explain to them the *Doctrine of Life and Salvation*, and to our uttermost persuade them to be reconciled to God.

3. That

3. That such who appear to have the *Essential Requisites* to *Church-Communion*, we shall willingly receive them in the Lord, not troubling them with Disputes about *lesser matters*.

As we Assent to the forementioned HEADS of AGREEMENT; *So we Unanimously Resolve, as the Lord shall enable us, to* Practice *according to them.*

FINIS.

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